



Series: Colossians: Before All Things

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Text: Colossians 2:6-2:23

Title: The Deep Roots of Pride

Intro

Good Morning Mercy Church. Colossians 2. As you are making your way there, I want to celebrate with our Mercy Northeast campus. Two weeks ago, they had their largest attendance ever on a Sunday. And then last week they had an even larger attendance. I got a message about a member at Mercy Northeast who invited a friend after having some spiritual conversations and that friend came, heard the gospel and now they are talking about it together. When we celebrate growth - THAT is what we are celebrating. God is using you in the lives of your friends and family members to bring them one step

closer to knowing Jesus. And the result is God's house filled on the weekend with people expecting & celebrating life change. Ok on to our sermon.

This series in Colossians we've themed **Colossians: Before All Things**. This comes from chapter 1 where our writer says Jesus IS before all things and He has come to have first place in everything. He's first. We talked about how worthy he is of that position on the podium of our lives. Of how we can sometimes put him among all things but that's not what he came for. He came to have FIRST PLACE IN EVERYTHING. And the underlying premise is that when we put him first place in everything, we flourish. Because we were made by him and for him.

Discipleship plan connection

And what we are trying to do as a church, during this series, is build a workable plan to implement "Jesus before all things" in our real lives. That's what your 2024 discipleship plan is for. If you haven't picked one up, I hope you will. It's not too late to get started on it. Man, I've been encouraged by so many of you who have shared with me about the steps God is calling you to take to put Jesus FIRST before all things in your life. Some of you like I just mentioned are talking about your faith with your friends for the first time, others stepping into ministry through the church, and others giving for the first time. Some of you are taking the step of baptism! It's awesome and I believe God is going to bless our steps of faith!



This week the guide is going to talk about serving others and for many, I hope this helps you take a Christ-like step in your life. The step will look different for everybody, but everybody will have a step. Maybe it will be to serve on a Sunday AM team, maybe it will be to join our prayer team or our student ministry. We are going to talk today about new life vs old life and the power of the new life in Christ is experienced in serving others. That's the discipleship plan.

So, to move into our sermon today I want to read you a question from our passage that will serve as the guiding question for us this morning.

20 If you died with Christ to the elements of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? -- Colossians 2:20

If we actually died with Christ...(which - if that is new language to you because you are new to church just hang in there we will talk about what that means in just a minute) - but in short if we actually have surrendered our lives to Jesus, If we have received a new life, **why do we still live like we are in our old lives?**

I don't know about you, but I think this is a very relatable question to our experience following Jesus. A lot of Christians feel like their spiritual life is less one of progress and more like a seesaw. Good with Jesus for a while, then slip back into that

old life, up, then down again. You get inspired to put Jesus **FIRST BEFORE ALL THINGS**, and then some time goes by and he's back **among** all things if he's there at all.

And ya'll the people all around us are CRYING OUT for something to hope in. A hope that a different day is possible for them. And we Christians have that hope in the gospel BUT, so often our lives demonstrate **temporary** change. not **lasting** change. So why would people outside the church put their hope in a gospel that doesn't seem to have lasting power in our lives? Why would they want to get on that seesaw?

And I know we don't WANT the see-saw life either. It's exhausting and frustrating. SO, we are going to talk today about Paul's question. Why do we keep going back to the old life? And to help us ...we have to deal with what Paul called in verse 20 the elements of the world.

When he says elements...don't think weird crystals from the cones of dunshire or something. Think more like a spiritual periodic table. The elements of this world are the foundational building blocks of a world that has rejected God. Vanity, Lust, Greed, pride, wrath, sloth. **The reason many Christians struggle to keep Jesus first...to see lasting change... is because the ELEMENTS of THIS world have roots that reach FAR deeper into our hearts than we are aware of.**



See we become Christians we unknowingly bring these elements with us like carry-on luggage into our relationship with God. And without realizing it, we practice a form of Christianity where we raise our hands to Jesus, but our feet remain rooted in the elements of the world. **The “element” we are going to see in our passage today is - pride.** Now depending on what voices you listen to you may think of a bunch of different ideas when I say pride. You may think of an agenda in our current culture, you may think of positive mental health, you may think of a pride of lions I don’t know. But this word and idea has been around since the bible and at its core: **pride is giving ourselves credit for something God has done.**

If you are new to the bible, letters like Paul’s letter to the Colossian church use logic to build to key points. So, our sermon will kind of do the same thing. It will build to application but you gotta see it develop. Here’s how the sermon will go:

1. **A quick heart check.** It’s like Paul checks our spiritual vitals with a basic concept that reveals where we truly are with God.
2. We’ll see **What God did for us.** That’s VERY important. Because the Christian life isn’t lived FOR salvation but FROM salvation. Not TO EARN God’s acceptance but because we HAVE God’s acceptance in Jesus. Very important because that will show us that there is NO

ROOM for pride. It will show us why our pride is, in fact, unfounded. So that’s first.

3. Then 3rd, we’ll talk about **WHY we still live prideful lives.** That’s where we’ll get into the heart. Honestly, that part is pretty tough because we’ll see pride is deeper in our hearts than we realize.
4. And Lastly - **How to fight against pride** so we can get off the see-saw and keep Jesus first. How we can fight against religious pride in our lives.

Pretty simple, I hope. A quick heart check, what God did for us, why we still try to be prideful even after seeing all that, and finally how to fight against pride that creeps into our hearts. Let’s start with that quick heart check. Vv 6-9

6 So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in him, 7 being rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude.

Hopefully what you are seeing right out of the gate today is that you haven’t EARNED Christ as Lord...you have **received** Christ Jesus as Lord. And we are to continue with him in the same way we started. Our salvation **DEPENDS** on him. Entirely. And **SO DOES OUR DAILY WALK.** It **DEPENDS** on him. **That’s where we mess up.** We stop depending on Jesus and start relying on ourselves. “Thanks for opening the door, Jesus, I got it from here.” No, you don’t. And **PRIDE** comes when we focus



on OUR performance. “Look what I did.” And Paul is reminding them to stay FAMILIAR with the gospel. “Look what Jesus Did.” And a SIGN that you are staying rooted and built up in him - is that you are overflowing with gratitude.

A sign you are growing in your walk with Jesus is gratitude.

Here’s the deal - Pride is usually a hidden disposition - but the visible emotion is entitlement. You feeling entitled to God’s praise and man’s praise. But when you understand the gospel, your hidden disposition is humility. He did it all. And the VISIBLE emotion is gratitude. You are thankful a lot because you have a lot to be thankful for.

Can that be a sort of honest inventory you take of yourself this week? Am I a thankful person? Am I OVERFLOWING with gratitude? I feel like the need for thanksgiving, call for thankfulness keeps showing up in our sermon scriptures and I believe that’s God! Look - I need it as your pastor. I get so focused on what Mercy Church needs that what can happen in my heart is humility can be pushed out by pride. And the visible result will be ENTITLEMENT instead of Gratitude. Something like - Mercy Deserves better facilities! Come on God! You owe us.

And I have to recalibrate. Wait...God doesn’t owe me anything. Why am I feeling entitled? Because I’m proud. I think I’VE done something. I’m forgetting that all I have is a GIFT! And if I can begin my day from a place of humility

remembering what Jesus has done for me...and then let gratitude flow from that - man that is a REALITY SHIFTING perspective. That’s the gratitude lesson. Now there’s this transition thought he uses to move into talking about what God has done for us.

8 Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ. 9 For the entire fullness of God’s nature dwells bodily in Christ,

Throughout this letter Paul is doing so much work to show them how awesome Jesus is. How worthy he is. And he knows - man he knows - how easy it is for the human heart to be deceived. There is something happening in the Colossian church where people are trying to promote a distorted version of Christianity where it’s **based more on your performance than on Christ’s performance**. At its root is pride. Taking credit for what God did. It’s trying to put a human back in control of their destiny instead of God. And Paul knows the most dangerous heresies are the ones that are just a little off. Like they look holy, but they ultimately are diverting glory from God & putting it on people. And Paul drives home how crazy it is to try and do that as a Christian because the entire fullness of God dwells in Jesus. In other words. Jesus is God and you are not. How silly to try and take credit for anything he has done? But we do it. And that takes us to part 2 of our sermon. It’s a COMBO KNOCKOUT PUNCH of What God did for



us in Jesus. And it is AWESOME. But I don't want you to get lost so here's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna read verses 10-15 all together and THEN I'll list out the combo God did for us. And you can write em all down if you want OR, go to our website & get the transcript of the sermon. I've included some additional content on each one of these there in "the bench" section.

10 and you have been filled by him, who is the head over every ruler and authority. 11 You were also circumcised in him with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, 12 when you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses. 14 He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him.

OOOOO man this is so good. Ya'll there are at LEAST 4 sermons in those 6 verses. Probably more. So let me give you a way to hang on to what he just said. This is the "WHAT GOD DID FOR US" part of the passage. And the reason it's so powerful is because it is meant to be like a WORSHIPFUL way to KNOCK YOU OUT of the throne of your life.

What God did for us:

- God came to live with us (v.10)
- God gave us new life (v.11-13)
- God paid for and forgave ALL our sins (v.13-14)
- God gave us victory over Satan, sin, and even death (v.15)

I'm gonna let that sit up there for a minute so you can write them down or just worship man.

A/V - Gotta let this sit for a while so people have time to write em down. I'm going to be talking about them for a while anyway so leave it up until I get to the next slide.

Verse 10 is a call back to last week where Paul said the mystery that just is hard to explain is that God now dwells in you. Jesus said it would happen in John 14. He said the holy spirit would come & live in every believer and what that looks like is God guiding us. Comforting us, giving us peace & security, convicting us of sin, directing us towards his ways, & shaping us day after day into who we are created to be. GOD LIVES IN YOU!

That thing about circumcision and baptism - without a whole theological rabbit trail here's what he's saying - In the Old Testament the way people were admitted into the people of God was through the physical act of circumcision. A permanent change symbolizing your new identity and the new community you belong to. And Paul says for Christians...we



have a different sign. Not one of the external flesh but one of the internal heart. God circumcises or permanently changes our hearts. And then the outward sign of that inward change is baptism. We've got baptisms happening today at our Northeast Campus. Here's what will happen - someone will go under the water symbolizing verse 12. Buried with him. Then we'll pull them up out of the water symbolizing they are raised with Christ to a new life. So instead of circumcision, baptism is your mark of entrance into the people of God.

Should you get baptized? Well, have you received salvation in Christ? If so, the answer is yes. Not to earn salvation but to profess it. Man, our prayer is to see more people baptized this year than last year. That your friend, your classmate, your roommate, your spouse, your co-worker - Who is far from God but close to you - will take their next step and get baptized as a profession of faith in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. And maybe that's your step!

Pastor Brett, our student pastor, was telling me he was baptized at about 7 years old. His parents encouraged it and he thought he was doing the right thing. But for him, it wasn't a sign of heart change. And then he ran from the Lord. He became a Christian at 20 and then he took the step of baptism here at Mercy while he was a college student at UNCC. Maybe that's your step. Can't talk any more about that in the sermon but our pastoral staff would love to talk with you about it at some point.

All four of these promises are so powerful! It's all there to say...LOOK AT WHAT GOD DID FOR US! LOOK AT HIM! New Life! Forgiveness! Presence! Victory! God did that! And with our eyes fixed on what God did and how awesome he is...we arrive at part 3 of our message: **Why we still live prideful lives.**

16 Therefore, don't let anyone judge you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.

See with pride comes judgment. There was something happening in the church where your religious performance was becoming the measuring stick instead of God's performance. And what is happening is some in the church are judging the sincerity of one's faith based on their diet, based on whether or not they observe the religious festivals or even the manner in which they observe the sabbath day. "we're all Christians...but if you really want to be a good Christian you don't eat that meat sacrificed to idols. You will come to all the festivals. You will be really strict about the sabbath day." Now what's wrong with this? It's not that these things are bad.

Especially the sabbath. The sabbath is a wonderful GIFT from God woven into the fabric of the created order. You will certainly be better for observing the sabbath. It's not that the practices are bad, **it's that judging one another by them will draw us away from their purpose.** They are supposed to point



us to Jesus. JESUS is supposed to get the credit. Remember our definition of pride? Taking credit for something God has done. When we take credit for how we did on the sabbath, we rob Jesus of the glory & honor due to him. That's verse 17.

17 These are a shadow of what was to come; the substance is Christ.

Take the sabbath...Jesus says man was not made for the sabbath but the sabbath was made for man. And the author of Hebrews is going to tell us that **the whole purpose of the sabbath day was to point us to the Sabbath GOD who would bring eternal Sabbath to us in the form of Jesus.** We find ultimate rest not in a day but in a person. The day is a shadow of the person. So, we are not to be judged by our adherence to the sabbath...because God says the sabbath is a shadow. Shadows aren't tangible. They are images without substance. The Sabbath is meant to give credit to Jesus for giving us REST. We rest IN HIM.

He gives a couple more examples of how they were trying to take credit away from Jesus:

18 Let no one condemn you by delighting in ascetic practices and the worship of angels, claiming access to a visionary realm. Such people are inflated by empty notions of their unspiritual mind. 19 They don't hold on to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and tendons, grows with growth from God.

I love the word inflated there at the end of 18. Because that's what pride does. It INFLATES your ego. Makes you feel bigger than you are. Someone judging your worth or value by performance or listen - someone giving you just an emotional experience - is inflated. They are forgetting that Jesus is the head of the body that is the church. He is the one that holds the body together. He is our means of growing. Jesus himself says this in John 15 just with a different word picture. I am the vine, and you are the branches. Abide in me and then you will bear much fruit.

And again, it's not that all religious practices are wrong. In fact

- God calls us to fast & pray.
- He calls us to give our money to the church so ministry can go forward.
- Calls us to serve the brothers and sisters of the church.
- God calls us to seek justice for the oppressed.
- Calls us to share the gospel to the ends of the earth.

But the beginning and end of these practices must be Jesus. If Jesus is not the beginning and the end of your Christian faith...

- Beginning – His work on the cross motivates your obedience.
- End – His presence in your life and his name exalted through your life.



If he is not the beginning and end...your faith will be a seesaw. When you perform well - UP. But you sin...you come crashing down. & nothing worse than hitting the ground on a see saw. You gotta get off the see-saw man. So, he says...

20 If you died with Christ to the elements of this world, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?

NOW WE ARRIVE AT OUR QUESTION. **Why do still live prideful lives?** A butterfly would never crawl like a caterpillar along the ground. It has wings now. It would be absurd to go back to caterpillar activity. **Paul is using logic to point out that it can't be rational thinking that is leading people BACK into self-justification through religion.** You are DEAD to that! SO WHY do we go backwards and set up performance-based Christianity that takes credit away from Jesus and put it on to us I'll tell you why.

Before you were a Christian you had to find some way to justify your personal worth. You had to validate yourself. And the only way to do that was to compare yourself to others. Either others in your life or others you wanted to be like. Our culture has rating systems for everything from restaurants to podcasts etc. You can rate your dentist on google. Great dentist, 4 stars. Would have given her 5 stars but there was no prize box after my cleaning. we compare our bodies, our shopping carts, our cars, our shoes, our families and it's exhausting right? To CONSTANTLY try to measure up. Even more than we want to BE liked by a friend anymore we just

want to GET likes from strangers so we can feel the dopamine hit that makes us feel worthy for a minute.

And if you do...if you finally make it...its exhausting to maintain whatever status "it" is. That is called self-justification. I, myself try to justify why I am valuable. Why I matter.

The life of self-justification is exhausting. And sometimes it crumbles. Because life was too heavy for you to carry, and you just didn't realize it. Pride is a founding element of the world we live in.

And then you hear the gospel and it's this fresh oasis in the desert of self-justification. Jesus says You don't have to prove anything to anyone! Fresh water. Jesus says you ARE sinful. You do mess up. You've been trying to earn love & acceptance and you CANNOT earn that from the one source you need it from & that's God. God says you are worthy! BUT not because of how you perform! but because Jesus died to pay for your sins. So, God says you are worthy because Jesus made you worthy. And you see self-justification SHATTERED. PRIDE destroyed right?

Then here's what happens: We underestimate just how deep that need for self-justification was rooted down in our souls. And so over time...as we embed ourselves into Christianity & the Church...we begin to compare our spirituality to that of other Christians.

Before Jesus we compared our social lives to others...now we compare our prayer lives to others.



We used to compare pop culture knowledge but now we compare bible knowledge.

Before Jesus you used to compare how attractive your clothing made you – But now it's how modest / stylish your clothing makes you.

- “Raise your hands, touch your toes, if anything shows, change your clothes.”

we compare different things, But We are still comparing. And what we don't realize is the same element – pride (self-justification) - never left. It just found some church clothes. So, Paul calls it out look:

Why do you submit to regulations: 21 “Don't handle, don't taste, don't touch”? 22 All these regulations refer to what is destined to perish by being used up; they are human commands and doctrines. 23 Although these have a reputation for wisdom by promoting self-made religion, false humility, and severe treatment of the body, they are not of any value in curbing self-indulgence. -- Colossians 2:6-23 (CSB)

I hope you see what he says there in verse 23. These religious standards imposed by humans in prideful attempts to be superior to one another. And They sound good & several notable people have endorsed the back cover of this book BUT - they are not of any value...get this...in curbing self-indulgence. If Jesus is not the beginning and end of these practices...even the strictest of practices is NOT GOING TO

DEAL with the elements of the world rooted way down deep in your soul. It's just going to make you appear like you've got your life together for a little while. Until those elements break through the surface once again. So, what sets us free? We arrive at the last part of our sermon.

How to fight against pride in your life

So, if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. -- Colossians 3:1

How to fight against pride in your life: Seek the things above where Christ is. Ok listen. I'm about to review a truth that if you've been with Mercy for a bit, you've heard me say a couple times. BUT plenty of you are new and the ones that are not new...you need this again. I NEED THIS AGAIN. Needed it this week. Bigtime.

An old Scottish pastor named Thomas Chalmers - My roots are Scottish, so I love learning about Scottish stuff - Anyways he was a pastor in the early 1800s and he wrote a book called “the expulsive power of a new affection.” And his basic premise was this -

If you recognize something in your life that you continue to do and its sinful...there are two ways to fight it. One way is to focus on NOT doing that anymore. In our case: I'm going to STOP being prideful. I'm going to STOP. Chalmers says this is



REALLY hard and ultimately it isn't motivating enough. In fact, he says, its right but its only HALF of the equation. He says because we are made to focus our attention somewhere - we don't need to suppress our worship because we are worshipers. That's what we do. We simply need to redirect our worship onto Jesus. We don't need to close our eyes...we need to change what we are looking at.

And he said that when you look at Jesus you will find something more lovely. More valuable. Something BETTER than the thing that you used to spend all your time focusing on...and in the case of pride...something more lovely than YOU.

So, what is the cure to pride?

How to fight against pride in your life: Abide in Jesus!

Hebrews 12.1 - FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS! And run with endurance the race set before you. Then you'll be free to

serve others and bear all kinds of fruit without wondering what people think about your life. You'll be better able to disciple others because you won't be comparing yourself to them.

Look to Christ! Abide in Christ. The best thing for you right now is to become desperately needy before God. Cling to him. Run to him! Refuse to pull away from the throne of grace. For those of you tuning in who aren't Christians, I want you to see this is who we actually are. Not religious elites. In fact, we are easily deceived beggars. With nothing to bring. But we've been invited by God into a banquet. And the invitation is open to all who will receive it.

Close