

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – Epistle

Living The Cosmic Life

Colossians 1:1-14

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Analysis by Robin Morgan

1Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. 3In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 4for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, 5because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel 6that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. 7This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, 8and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit. 9For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. 11May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully 12giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to

share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

DIAGNOSIS: Say What?

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – Yeah, Right!

The writer of Colossians lays out a whole litany of goodies that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is bringing to pass: bearing fruit in the whole world and in ourselves (v. 6) so that we can be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (v. 9), lead lives worthy of the Lord (v. 10), be strong in the strength of his power and endure everything with patience (v. 11). What does this mean? These cosmic phrases seem to have little to do with our lives that bump along with rarely a flicker of the glow that these glorious words indicate belongs to us.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – Well?

What's wrong? Is it us or (we don't ask this out loud in church, only in the privacy of our own hearts) is it the Gospel? Maybe our lives in the trenches, the day-to-day mundane routines, show that Jesus Christ really isn't effective in the world (counter to v. 6). Maybe the Gospel is just a lot of flowery talk that doesn't translate or have any effect in the dog-eat-dog arenas we inhabit most of the week. Leave the cosmic phrases for Sunday morning when we gather with our neighbors and wish for a kinder, gentler world, but know that the good news of Jesus Christ has no real impact outside the sanctuary.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – Alrighty Then

So the One who has the power of life and death, the One who separated light from darkness, set the stars in their courses

and salvation history in motion, leaves us to our cynical observations. There will be no rescue from the power of darkness or transfer into the kingdom of the beloved Son (v. 13), neither redemption nor forgiveness. We are alone in the dark.

PROGNOSIS: Say “Amen”!

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – Almighty Now

This is where the real glowing begins. We have a “hope laid up in heaven” (v. 5). Here in our darkness, pinpoints of light slash through the bleak landscape. These pinpoints are not flickers of the cosmic fire in our souls merely waiting to be fanned into a roaring blaze by prayer and right living. No, these pinpoints of light are the heads of the nails pounded into the hands and feet of Jesus hanging on the tree of our darkness. They reflect the Father’s love, which took Jesus all the way to the cross for us. Since we won’t/can’t come to him, he comes to us, (v. 13 says “he has rescued us”), taking our dark, wounded separation from God and gives us his own brilliant light that floods out of the tomb when the stone is rolled away.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – Now I Get It

We’re sitting in the same places, doing the same jobs, driving the same roads, but now, with Jesus at our side, everything is different. We trust him to rescue us from the power of darkness, trust him to transfer us into his kingdom, trust him to redeem and forgive us (v. 13). Our mundane routines have been caught up into the cosmic drama that is Jesus Christ changing the universe forever.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – The Adventure Begins

We take our observations of the world to Christ, tell him what we see, and then we listen. How do we bear fruit (v. 6)? What is a life worthy of the Lord (v. 10)? How do we endure everything with patience (v. 11)? Now these cosmic phrases are part of our

adventure with the Lord rather than the burden of a constrained religious existence. We have his life inside of us, his Spirit working in us, and eternity to enjoy, to explore and learn God's will in all wisdom and understanding (v. 9). Bring a friend: The adventure starts now.