

“Who is Jesus? Fullness”

Colossians 1:19; 2:9-11

“Everything is amazing, and nobody is happy.” That’s what comedian Louis CK said a few years back. Louis CK was also unfulfilled. And like so many other unhappy men who have everything, he regularly went searching for fulfillment through inappropriate advances toward women.

“Who is Jesus?” we have been asking now for 3 weeks. Today, Paul answers, Jesus is **Fullness**.

Why does he say this? Because (8) he was worried about the culture surrounding the Colossian church. Various religious practices and philosophies were starting to look attractive to Christians there, and they were losing interest in Jesus.

You may think, Okay: a first-century religious guy telling people they were being tempted by strange religious beliefs and philosophies. What could be more irrelevant to my life!?

But not so fast!

We are constantly going after False Fillers --- things that might be good, or bad, but either way --- things that won’t fulfill us.

Then we’ll ask: Is Jesus really better? How does Fullness in Person fulfill us in a way that nothing else can?

Finally, “What changes in our lives when we’re filled and overflowing?”

False Fillers

Fullness in Person

Filled and Overflowing

1. **False Fillers**

We all have desires for things, experiences, and people. Someone comes --- on our Facebook feed, onto the TV, onto the bestseller rack at the bookstore --- saying that if we *really* want to be fulfilled, we’ve got to adjust our desires in this way, and change our behaviors in this other way.

Some examples:

Modern culture tells us that “more is more”. More things, experiences, and people.

“Who is Jesus? Fullness”

Colossians 1:19; 2:9-11

So we go after *stuff*. Square meters, lakeview and mountainview homes, bottles of wine, shoes.

We gobble up new *experiences*: vacations, Instagram likes, romantic encounters, academic degrees, new jobs, another mouthful of French Fries.

We want people. In fact, we reduce *people* into mere things and experiences to make us fulfilled: if I had a child, another child, a better behaved child, a spouse, a different spouse, another friend, a better friend, a lover, a lover on the side: I'd be happy.

When we see someone consuming things, experiences, and people like this, we think: “What’s wrong with this person who can never be happy without more more more?” But we want more, too.

But then there’s another popular philosophy: “Less is more.” Minimalism!

Fewer things, experiences, and people.

The minimalist says: I don’t need stuff. I don’t need thrills. I don’t need people. I need the things I really need, and everything else is stealing my fulfillment.

People admire minimalists, at first.

But minimalists often think they’re better than non-minimalists! “People who fill their lives with things, experiences, and people can’t bear spending their lives with themselves. I can. I rather like myself.”

Then there’s the “Less but Better” philosophy. What do you fill your life with? Joy. How do you get it? By asking every thing, every experience, everyone: Do you “spark joy”?

Almost overnight the Japanese tidying up expert Marie Kondo has invaded everyone’s Facebook feeds and Netflix queues. According to Wikipedia, to “Google” means to search the internet, and to “Kondo” means to clean out a closet.

But. Whether you are a more-is-more consumerist, a less-is-more minimalist, or a less-but-better tidy-upper, your focus is this: how do I get stuff, experiences, and people into this hole of mine so that I’m fulfilled?

This is a lot of pressure to put on your romantic partner, your vacation plans, and your socks and underwear! On your children, on your work, on your furniture. Everything is evaluated and judged by its ability to fulfill you. Can it meet my needs? Does it spark joy? If it doesn’t do the trick, it’s gone.

“Who is Jesus? Fullness”

Colossians 1:19; 2:9-11

I am glad that my wife doesn't look at me every evening and ask herself “does he spark joy?”!

My favorite band, U2, sings “I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For.” Culture comes to us and says, “*here's* what you're looking for.” And we think “Ooooh! Maybe it *is!*” That's why we need this Scripture passage. Because these are, Paul tells us, *false fillers*.

2. Fullness in Person

CS Lewis asked: If we find that the things of the world don't completely satisfy us, could it be that we were made for another world? By looking to things, experiences, and people to provide us with fullness, Lewis says, we are showing that our desires are messed up. But they're not, he says, too strong. They're too weak.

Here in Colossians, Paul says that if we are looking for something beyond Jesus to provide us with the fullness we crave, then we haven't really experienced the real Jesus. Because the real Jesus is (2:9) *the fullness of God* in a human person!

God has revealed himself in creation, kings, priests, prophets, rituals, songs, and poems. But (Hebrews 1; John 1) he has finally shown himself fully in this one human person: Jesus! There is nothing of God that is not present in Jesus. In Jesus, we see the very glory of God in a human face (2 Cor 4:6). In Jesus Christ, the fullness of God moved into the neighborhood and lived with us.

If you're not content in and with Jesus Christ alone, you want something better than God. It's just not going to happen. If you meet Jesus Christ and you decide that, to be full, to be content at the core of your being, you need something else ...

Then you haven't met the real Jesus Christ at all. Or you did meet him --- the very fullness of God in a human person --- and you've said “that's nice, but I need more.” Either way --- what a disaster!

Because it's not just that Jesus *is* God's fullness (10). Paul also says, verse 11, that Jesus alone can bring into our lives the fullness for which we are made; that Jesus himself alone is the fullness for which we've been made.

But: Adding Jesus to your life is not like adding a thing, experience, or a normal person to your life. Adding Jesus to your life is not even like adding the *best imaginable* thing, experience, or person to your life. We can't put Jesus on the level of joy-sparking socks and underwear, vacations, or even spouses. We can't reduce

“Who is Jesus? Fullness”

Colossians 1:19; 2:9-11

the fullness of God to just another thing, experience, or person. We must never think of Christian faith as just another way for some people to feel a sense of greater fulfillment.

Jesus is not in competition with rival False Fillers. He's not the *most* filling among otherwise fairly filling fillers. He *is* Fullness, and so he alone Fills.

If you are trusting in Jesus, then you *are* full in him. Your desires for other things are not necessarily wrong.

But if you think you are not a full person unless you have other things, experiences, and people, then you're wrong. Because the one who is over all, and through all, and in all, has been given to you, and you *are* full. Complete in Jesus. Lacking nothing.

You could have just the *right* things, experiences, and people in your life. But if you are not filled and completed by and in Jesus, given to you, then you will never taste fullness.

BUT! If, at the core of who you are, you have Jesus filling you, then you can lack all kinds of things, experiences, and people ... and still be absolutely complete in Christ.

Friends: No matter how many false fillers you've tried, all of his fullness is still offered to you today. Generously given, poured out at the cross, and ready to be poured into our hearts by God's Spirit. And so today, whether for the first time or the hundredth time, if you are restlessly looking for fulfillment anywhere or everywhere except in Jesus, come to Jesus and be fully filled.

3. Filled and Overflowing:

Can I ask a personal question? A church question? What would it be like to be really fulfilled as a church? There's a certain excitement that comes when a new pastor comes. Many of us are hoping to take advantage of the excitement and to grow our church. To expand our reach. As I mentioned, though, in my report for the ACM, I don't want us to start trying to save the world for Jesus until we allow Jesus to pry open the world of our minds and hearts and to make a whole new world out of them, full of himself. Only then will we enjoy serving Jesus, because only then will it actually be Jesus that we serve.

The same goes for our individual lives. Our marriages. Our families. Our friendships. Our careers. Our possessions.

“Who is Jesus? Fullness”

Colossians 1:19; 2:9-11

Once we learn to receive true Fullness in Jesus, we can begin both to receive and enjoy everything else in our lives the only way they can safely be enjoyed: in and through Jesus!

Once we are full in Christ *alone*, then we are radically free! Free to enjoy the good gifts we receive. Free to seize the opportunities we have. Free to pursue singleness or marriage, careers, whatever, because we're pursuing them *properly*! In this freedom, we can pray: “Jesus, this person, this thing, this experience is nice; thank you. But with or without them, I am complete in you. So thank you above all for *you*.” And we're free to pray for things we desire: “Jesus, you know me. You know I'd love a spouse, a friend, a job, a child. Please give. But be you. Give, or take away. Because I am full in you.”

And finally, receiving Jesus as our only fullness means we can begin to overflow into the lives of others by giving them things, experiences, and our finally-filled-in-Christ selves.

So may each of us, whether we have much or little; whether we are lonely or saturated with friendships; whether our work sparks joy or is really frustrating, be able to say, in these moments, and in the days ahead, “Christ is all of God's fullness. And I am utterly full in Christ!”

And may we, together, as a body, be able to say, today and tomorrow, “Out of his fullness, we have received grace upon grace. And now, full in him, let us overflow into our city together in the generous giving of things, experiences, and of our very selves. Let us be full in him, and overflowing to our community for him.”

Wouldn't that be something?

Are you? Are we? Full in Christ?