

All Things Lead to God: Hindsight is 20/20

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Texts: Colossians 1:9-20

[St. Paul writes:] Since the day we heard [of your faithfulness], we also do not cease to pray on your behalf, and to ask that you may be filled by the full knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk in a way worthy of the Lord, wholly pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the full knowledge of God, being empowered with every power by the might of his glory, to have all endurance and patience in hardships, with joy, giving thanks to God who has made you fit for participation in the inheritance of the light by the holy ones - [that is, giving thanks] to the God who delivered us from the power of the darkness and brought us into the Reign of Divine Love's Son, in whom we have the price of liberation, the forgiveness of sins, who is the image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation, because in him were created all things in the heavens and on earth, the visible as well as the invisible (whether Thrones or Governments or Judges or Authorities); all things were created through him and for him; and he is before all things, and all things hold together in him, and he is the head of the body, of the church — the origin, firstborn from the dead, so that he might himself hold first place in all things — for in him all the [Divine] Fullness was pleased to take up a dwelling, and through him to reconcile all things to the Divine, making peace through him by the blood of his cross, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens.

So that's perfectly clear, right? One simple sentence to lead us in matters of faith and life – and yes, although most translations divide it up for clarity, it is one sentence – in the Greek, 226 words that I am afraid sounds like it was written by AI, following the prompt “write me a run on sentence that includes as much vaguely spiritual language as possible.”

Luckily, I can break it down for you, and the heart of it all is really quite simple: the message here is that hindsight is 20/20.

More specifically, the message is that in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God was pleased to bring all things together into communion with God. In other words, in Jesus, we already know how everything turns out, and thus we can live accordingly in the world today.

Let's play with this a little: Imagine you have \$1000, and you have a single-use time machine. You could go back to 20 years and invest your \$1000 in Nvidia and have \$1.24 million today. Of course, in 2005 there were about 9000 publicly traded companies in the U.S. that you could have invested in, and with many of them you would have gone broke, and you had no way of knowing for sure that Nvidia stock would become so valuable (but, I do remember that in 2005 my 15 year old son put together his own computer and carefully chose to put an Nvidia graphics card in it – so, if only...) - but given that you had information from today, you would know what to do. Hindsight is 20/20. Of course, if you took that single-use time machine back just 15 years and invested \$1000 in Bitcoin you'd have \$1.37 billion today – so there's that. Hindsight is 20/20.

What Paul is saying in this ridiculous run-on sentence in his letter to the church in Colossae is that you already know how it all turns out. You already know where everything is headed. Everything is headed to being brought, through Christ, into communion with God – everything is headed to its true home in the fullness of God's love. Therefore, Jesus, and everything aligned with him in this world...well, wins. But it is not an us against them victory where some are crushed and other triumph – it's a reconciling victory, where everything that is not aligned with Jesus and his way in the world is drawn to the truth and beauty of Divine Love, and freely comes around to Jesus and his way. That's how it all turns out: God's love in Christ draws all things together.

And therefore, having this hindsight, knowing where things are headed, the church in Colossae, and the church in Cambridge, is free to...let me use the word "invest," accordingly, now. We are free to invest in all the things that align with Jesus and his way in the world. We are free to invest in love rather than fear. Justice rather than complacency. Forgiveness rather than bitterness. The well-being of all rather than the well-being of me and mine. We are free as well to be patient, knowing that love and justice and forgiveness and the well-being of all are all on the right side of history, of the Divine way. And we are free as well to "risk" everything (although it is actually not a risk, because we know how things turn out) - knowing where things are headed, we are free to "risk" everything in being with and fighting for those who suffer from the last-ditch battles fought by fear and complacency and bitterness and self-centeredness. Hindsight is 20/20, and hindsight is ours, for we know where things are headed.

Here, let's play with the idea again. I'm gonna build a sentence and I want you to imagine the parts of it as I go along. Create the images in your mind. Okay: the plant...was humming...with "worker bees" ...as the boss dismissively called his employees. You see? You didn't know what the sentence meant until the end was revealed, until you learned where it was headed.

In Colossians, Paul is making the same point: previous to Jesus, we didn't know where everything was headed, we didn't know the meaning of life, the world, or anything. But in Jesus, the end has been revealed: He and his way are how God brings all things into communion with God. Jesus and his way are how God wins – and that win is not just a victory for some, but for all – as Paul says, all things in the heavens and on earth, the visible as well as the invisible.

And, good people, all this gives us the right way to understand what we are doing today, pledge dedication Sunday. The offering you make today, and all that which you pledge today for the future, is an investment in Jesus and his way in the world. It is an investment in love and justice and forgiveness and the well-being of all, an investment in the message, carried not just by words, but by the life of a people, that Jesus and his way lead, unfailingly, to the gathering of all things into communion with God.

The gifts you bring today, and the gifts you give in the future that are reflected in your pledges, are a sign that you already know where things are going, and you are joyfully contributing to God's way of working it all out.

In Jesus and his way, we see that all things are brought into communion with God. Having this common

vision of how things turn out, we are united as one body – and indeed Paul even says, surprisingly, we are the body of Jesus Christ himself. And because we already know where all things are going, we live this life boldly, bravely, faithfully.

In short, hindsight is 20/20, and hindsight is exactly what we have, so we are today, together, fearless.

In the name of the Living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Mother of us all. Amen.

