

# Jesus our Fullness

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's just pray. Lord, may the words of my mouth and meditation of all our hearts be ever acceptable to you, our Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen. Matt Lucas created an extraordinary number of hits with this clip and perhaps summed up the conflicting information that many of us experienced over the last 19 months.

I think it's really interesting when we start getting conflicting advice and the renewals came and went seemingly conflicting advice at times.

Maybe like me, you heard the words that people said, oh, you know, people are making it up as we go along. In our serious, confident Christianity, we have to be clear and confident that those who are seeking to lead aren't making it up as we go along.

Very important in a Christian setting. And clearly this was prevalent in the early church. That's why Paul, who was sat in prison at this time, I often wonder for us, if we were sat in prison, what would the sort of thing we'd be writing to everybody else?

Would it be, oh, woe is me? Here is Paul actually encouraging a church, an embryonic church, the Colossian church, to actually deal with this false information that they were beginning to get.

[ 1 : 27 ] And clearly Paul is getting a little bit hot under the collar with this in his teaching. Because this is where I have to mention the word circumcision.

Now, I've joined a few clubs in my time where you've got to fill in a form, even maybe you've got to pay a subscription.

But actually when it gets to the point where actually I have parts of my body having to be removed in order to join this club, maybe you can understand the reticence of some of the Gentiles who were beginning this false teaching of the Jewish leaders at the time, saying you can't be in our club unless you're actually physically circumcised.

And this was the message that was getting back to Paul. And he said, so where is this message coming from? Because this isn't the message that Jesus gave. For the Jewish converts to Christianity, it was no problem, obviously, because they didn't have to jump through that place as others had to.

But I think probably if I was a Gentile at that time, I think I would probably really have been really pleased to have received Paul's letter, to think that I don't have to go through this in order to follow Jesus.

[ 2 : 52 ] It's easy to make it up as we go along. I don't know if when you were young you made up clubs when we were little. We sort of made up a club, didn't we?

And what the thing of that club was is that all the people we liked joined it, but maybe the sole thing was for the people we didn't like couldn't join it.

And so here we have classically what is happening here. And nothing changes really. Look at some so-called fraternal organisations that preclude different people from joining them.

Paul is saying to this new church and its leaders, we don't need these past human traditions. This is a new beginning. This is a fullness of Christ.

Because yes, it was the old law, but things changed at the cross. Things changed dramatically as the cross, as Jesus died for each and every person. And I can sense many of the Colossian Gentiles converts being really encouraged by this.

[ 3 : 59 ] And as it says, see to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world, rather than on Christ.

And we can all make up rules and regulations, can't we? As we join, and Paul is saying, what's the most important thing here? Made up rules and traditions, or the fullness of a life-giving and

life-saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

That is the most important thing. Life in all its fullness. In Christ, you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over everything. Slave or free, we are all accepted, loved, and welcomed.

Don't make up the rules and the regulations and add to the saving work of Jesus. You can't do that. It's already been done on the cross.

He made the perfect sacrifice for sin. We don't need to add things on. So why is Paul getting a bit miffed with all these so-called leaders who are saying, in order to be a follower of Jesus, you need this sign?

[ 5 : 14 ] Well, I have to show you a dream that I had once. The dream is that we were going to a fancy dress party.

Now, Mandy will tell you, I really detest fancy dress parties. It's just not my thing. Unless, of course, I'm going to the cathedral, in which case to an ordination, and you all go in fancy dress.

But it's this thing of, you know, so I'm talking about fancy dress, sort of SpongeBob SquarePants, you know, Superman, all those sort of things that people dress up at.

Anyway, as I arrive in my dream to this thing, here I am in fancy dress, it is the poshest gig you've ever been to. Everybody there is in bow ties, suits, lots of sparkly dresses.

You get the idea. Very, very. And I have to spend the whole evening wandering around dressed as a human traffic cone.

[ 6 : 17 ] Now, if there's anybody here who's a psychologist that can help me with that, please drop me an email. I'm sure there's a reason for it. I probably need some therapy. It's a bizarre dream.

But in this dream, maybe you get the idea of what it must be like to feel the odd one out. And clearly, that's Paul writing to a group of people, the Gentiles, you and me, saying, you shouldn't feel left out.

You are totally included. What I have done, what Jesus has done on the cross, is for all of us. I think we can lose that when I've had enough of my dream. The way of life which showed us at the cross, we don't have to add anything to that at all.

Whatever the roots of a particular way of life or the peculiarities of a tradition, never let it undermine the sole purpose and work of Jesus receiving that fullness.

It didn't surprise me that people were queuing around the corner only a few weeks ago to fill up their tanks. People knew what it was like to look at that gauge and know what fullness meant.

[ 7 : 31 ] It meant confidence. It meant I can go wherever I like. I can do whatever I do because I've got a tank full of fuel. I'm not going to be worrying on the journey. What we're talking about here is receiving that fullness for each and every one of us.

And this thing that Paul is saying to them, Paul warns the early church, the danger of adding earthly trappings that gets in the way of the have and the have-nots.

I give so much thanks for the screens behind me. In fact, should we give a round of applause to our tech team that week by week do an amazing ministry for us?

Because I remember years and years, and I've been around church a few times, and yeah, different places, but to be presented at the door with a book.

Imagine if you'd come to church for the first time. You are given a book that you have never looked at before. And in that book, and there is words, but not necessarily all in the right order, if you know.

[ 8 : 41 ] And I used to stand there and cringe when I saw a new person who had come to church, stood there opening a book, and someone with the best will in the world would step over and say, it's that page you should be on.

Praise God for screens. We're all in the same boat together. Nothing is kept. We make up rules in order to raise our own significance.

My gran used to love to wear a hat to church on Sundays. I'd never ever see her in church without a hat. I'm not really sure that she felt that that added anything to what she did.

But what she loved to do was criticize everybody else that didn't wear hats on a Sunday. I think what Paul is getting at here, therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or even in the way in which you behave.

Clearly, there is a judgmental spirit that is rising up in this early church that Paul has heard about.

And as soon as you start getting a judgmental spirit in the church is bad news.

[ 10 : 04 ] Paul identified it really early. They have lost connection with the head from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grow as God causes it to

grow.

He wants us to be Jesus in all our fullness and of what he can be. What marks you out as a follower of Jesus?

Is it what we wear? I don't think so. Is it maybe something we... I think it's our character. That's what marks it out.

And that's what Paul is saying to this early church. Mark yourselves out, not by what you do, not by what you wear, not by what you do to your body, but by your character. Put on the fullness of Christ. Beware of the veneer of Christianese that maybe other people want you to put on. Be who God has called you to be in all its fullness.

[11:01] And Paul knows that that is so easy to twist the good gifts of God and to make it into something that points to us rather than points to him. This warning, I think, is as fresh to us today as it was to the early church.

To receive that fullness that all of God has for us to share with other people. We've heard part of that story this morning. What a difference it makes when somebody comes in the fullness of Christ to share what they have and make a difference in the world.

And you see, the false teaching is damaging because when you start to deviate from the word of God, from Scripture, then it's like a boat without a rudder.

It goes all over the place. Come back, St. Paul. Come back to what is important. Hold to Scripture. Hold to that. Many years ago, I spoke to a lady.

She dragged herself to an 8 a.m. communion. She could hardly stand up. She was as laudable as it was that she'd actually come. She was sweating with a fever.

[12:12] She was unsteady on her feet. And she'd been told, when I spoke to her, I said, you just don't need to be here. Please, please go home.

And she'd been taught that if she didn't take communion on a Sunday, if anything happened during that week, she wouldn't receive the blessings of heaven.

What a cruel teaching. And she was 82. We have to be so careful what we slap on people that is of us, the church, rather than everything that is of God, which is of love and blessing, forgiveness, hope, and all the other things that he brings.

Jesus in all his fullness. Paul is writing again to a people who he wants to see thrive. And he says this verse, the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. I think that's an interesting verse that we would do well by because Paul knew that this false teaching, these man-made rules, diminished the fullness of Jesus in us and our mission.

[13:47] And you say, how does that work? I found this, which I found really helpful. You see, when deceptive ideas are placed into our mind, it's a slippery slope.

It's a slippery slope that we get this false teaching and then that is ordered to play out in our own desires. And that gets lived out in our life.

And then that moves through that is normalized, normalized in society. So it says, this is okay to make up these rules. We make up these rules, then it plays into our own desires.

It focuses towards us. And then as we know too well, it's played out in the world in the everyday.

Thank you. Jesus came. Jesus came to make sure that actually we would have the confidence in who we are in Christ to break the chain.

I just want to encourage us this morning through Paul's writing to us is to receive that fullness of everything that he has for us. And the questions I would want to ask is, what is the lies that's been spoken to you over years, and over me as well, that actually diminishes that fullness of what we have, that confidence to share with other people?

[15:18] What is it where we don't think that we carry the Christ lights into the communities, into the places we have? Where is it that we hear that voice that we need to buzz out to say, oh, you shouldn't be doing that here.

You shouldn't be saying that here. You shouldn't be stepping into that situation here, bringing the hope and love of Christ, the fullness of everything that we carry into situations.

Maybe the things where we've been diverted by putting on religious airs and graces, this isn't proper worship because we don't do it this way.

Well, who said we did it this way? Isn't it about the fullness of Christ, of us receiving and coming to worship, bringing and being full, and taking away with us that joy into the world this week?

Maybe there is a fresh confidence that we need in the gospel. And maybe again, you don't have to read your Bible. Just tune into some radio station.

[16:33] Maybe leave your Bible on the shelf. Those things where we need maybe to get back into scripture to say, what is the truth of this? What are you teaching me, Lord?

We are called to grow in confidence because of the fullness that Christ dwells with us in the Holy Spirit. If you're queuing to fill up, fill up this morning.

If you feel as though you've been running on half empty with the fullness of Christ, fill up this morning. If you feel that something has been missing, then leave from here this morning knowing in the confidence of all that Christ has for you, in you, and through you, because nobody gets left out. Should we just pray together? I just pray this morning, Lord, that you would come in the power of your Holy Spirit and we would know the fullness of everything that you have for us.

I pray for those, Lord, that have been maybe diminished or ground down at any time by rules and regulations that have been placed on us by others.

[18:00] I pray for areas in our lives where suddenly our understanding of you has been warped or contorted in a way that wasn't meant to be and we haven't seen or fully grasped or been able to grasp the fullness of all that you have for us.

I pray, Lord, for a freedom for those this morning who maybe through time have lost confidence in you and in your power that dwells in us.

Restore that confidence this morning, I pray. And I pray for those, Lord, who maybe have lost confidence in sharing faith with others that you would give us that fullness, give us that words and the power of your Spirit to share with those in whatever situation that we may be in, in our homes, our schools, our work, wherever that may be.

So, Holy Spirit, would you come? Would you fill us afresh, Lord, with the confidence of knowing you and all you have done for us on the cross?

Would you lift us, Lord, into a fresh place of confidence of walking with you? Lord, for your church, would you restore your church, Lord, to the fullness of all that it is, of all that it should be and all that it can be with you as our head and as our sovereign?

[19:46] Lord, we thank you, we praise you, and we bless you. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. mb