PUT ON THE NEW SELF

An inheritance in Jesus' kingdom, *Colossians 1:9-20*

Several of our deacons have been meeting regularly over the past couple of years to develop plans for implementing our elders' vision through improved communication and collaboration. Part of their effort involves choosing an annual theme around which to organize their activities. They selected the following theme for this year:

Equipped for the mission: every disciple, every place

Their theme motivates this lesson, which introduces a series considering the question, **"What does it look like to be equipped for the mission?"** We will explore Paul's letter to the Colossians, focusing on the traits he instructed them to "put on"[1] (*Colossians 3:12-14*), which together form the portrait of an equipped disciple. This lesson begins the series by examining Paul's introductory comments – *Jesus' preeminent identity ought to motivate people "to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (Colossians 1:3-23).*

Walk in a worthy manner

- Paul opened his letter to the Christians in Colossae with a prayer, asking God to fill them with knowledge and wisdom so they could "walk in a manner worthy" of Jesus (*Colossians 1:10*).
- He explained his prayer by using ideas and imagery from the Exodus and applying them to the Colossian Christians.
    - Using language reminiscent of the land inheritance God promised to the Israelites during the exodus (*cf. Numbers 18:20; 26:52-56*), Paul reminded the Colossians that God "qualified [them] to share in the inheritance of the saints" (*Colossians 1:12; cf. Ephesians 3:1-6*).
    - Rather than guaranteeing them a portion of land within the limited borders of Canaan, Paul wrote that God's new exodus had "delivered [them] from the domain of darkness and transferred [them] to **the kingdom of his beloved Son**" (*Colossians 1:13; cf. Matthew 27:11; 28:18-20; Daniel 7:1-14*).
- To help his audience understand the significance of their inheritance in Jesus' kingdom, Paul offered several insights into Jesus' rule:
    - In a statement reminiscent of Genesis 1:26-28, Paul wrote that Jesus "is the image of the invisible God" (*Colossians 1:15*). But unlike humans who *reflect* God's image, Jesus *shares* in God's identity and possesses a unique right to rule as

[1] All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.

God's "firstborn" (heir) and as the creator and sustainer of everything (*Colossians 1:16-17*). Consequently, **Jesus' kingdom and rule encompass all of creation, all the cosmos** (*cf. Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:9-11*).
    - Jesus does not merely rule everything already in existence; he more importantly inaugurates a new creation (*Colossians 1:15, 18; cf. Galatians 6:15; Revelation 21-22*). **Jesus' kingdom is the beginning of a new creation** in which God guarantees Christians an inheritance.
    - The new reality, of which Jesus is the "beginning," does not simply replace the sin-broken world introduced in Genesis 3; **Jesus' kingdom fixes the world's brokenness by reconciling humans and the creation to God** (*Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 1:3-10; Romans 8:18-21*).
    - Even though it has not yet been fully realized, **Jesus' kingdom exists in the present through the church** (*Colossians 1:18-19*).
- God transferred the Colossians into Jesus' kingdom, but that transfer carries an obligation – they were reconciled to be holy and blameless, which required them to be "stable and steadfast" (*Colossians 1:21-23*).

Applications

- The mission we have embraced at the 151st church family belongs to a larger, cosmos-spanning plan God enacted through Jesus.
- Jesus' preeminent identity offers the foundation and motivation for our efforts to share the Good News about him. Basing our efforts on anything other than Jesus' preeminence – no matter how good it might seem – will always and inevitably corrupt what we do.
- Our message about deliverance from the power of darkness and transfer to Jesus' kingdom speaks to both the future AND the present; the ways in which Jesus transforms our lives illustrate the reality of his kingdom and rule.
- Paul's employment of Exodus imagery and ideas reminds us that God expects us to interpret our lives in terms of the *entire* Bible's story. The Bible – not television shows, not movies, not books – must become the context for understanding our lives.