

“All His fullness” Col 1:19-20

*Tim Anderson 13/12/2020*

I got a double fix of baby cuddles this week.  
I had a cuddle of George after church last Sunday,  
then I had a cuddle of Darcy at playgroup.  
Now that we are not having any more,  
I get even more clucky holding newborn babies of friends.  
To think that only months ago,  
This little person was in utero.  
How on earth did he fit?  
How did he get out?  
I mean I know how these things work  
I've watched it happen  
but they are amazing none the less.  
So these little ones are out making their mark on the world.  
One day if God is kind,  
They will be fully grown like me.  
Every baby is amazing.  
But no more amazing than the next one.  
Every parent thinks that their little one has something different –  
Something that sets them apart from all others.  
And we indulgently listen to their stories  
about how their child uniquely gifted.  
But when we look at the mass of babies that aren't our own,  
We understand them for what they are,  
Incredible marvels of God's creative design;  
And each one is special to their parents in a unique way.  
But in reality they are all equally special.  
All equal except one baby.  
One baby really is different.  
Col 1:19 "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him."

The cosmic God –  
The one who made the universe –  
The one who rules over all,  
Things in heaven and things on earth –  
Things visible and invisible;  
Thrones or powers or rulers or authorities –  
Dwelt fully in a baby that screamed and puked.  
"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him."

Forget the Christmas cards,  
Where there is a painting of the stable in Bethlehem that has been done by  
one of the old masters.  
Where every piece of straw has been artistically arranged.  
Where the stable itself looks like it has had the once over  
from an executive pest removal service.  
There are definitely no rodents in that stable –  
And certainly no fleas or lice.  
The cattle are totally toilet trained  
so they wander outside when they need to go.  
Forget the pictures that hang from your mantelpiece.  
This was the dodgiest address in the neighbourhood.  
This was where you went when you had to bunk down for the night,  
And the seediest two star hotel in town –  
The one where the linen hasn't been changed for a month  
And there are cockroaches running across the floor –  
was fully booked.  
The reason Mary and Joseph chose that place  
is because no one else would take it.  
The cosmic God who made everything was born and laid out to rest there.  
For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the baby Jesus.

What does it mean for us that

“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him”?

About 700 odd years before Jesus was born,

The prophet Isaiah said,

“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son

And will call him Immanuel.”

You’ve probably seen it written just beneath the painting by the old master on the Christmas card.

And Immanuel means “God is with us”.

God is with us.

That’s the first thing that

“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,” means.

“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,” means

“God is with us”.

God is not standing at a distance

and giving us a score out of 10 for our lives.

No. God has come and joined in our human struggle.

God didn’t just come and partially see what it was like to be human.

Like the Queen spending a day with commoners.

God didn’t dip his toe in the water,

So he could go away and tell everyone

that he knows about swimming in the ocean.

No. God knows what it is to be human fully.

He experienced aspects of life as a man that we hopefully never will.

Extreme poverty, extreme cruelty, extreme suffering.

And God didn’t do that by proxy.

Jesus Christ was not just God’s human representative.

No. Jesus was fully God.

“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.”

And that means that God is with us.

“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,”

It also means that you matter.

Now you probably don't need me to tell you that you matter.  
We have an inbuilt sense that we matter.  
That the decisions we make have consequences.  
Potentially we can make a significant difference for good or ill  
in the world in which we live.  
Those truths sit deeply in our hearts.  
But there is a competing message out there.  
From authors like Albert Camus to song writers like Freddy Mercury,  
We have expressions of nihilism.  
Mercury sang, "Nothing really matters, anyone can see."  
And then there are evolutionary biologists and new atheists  
Who will calmly tell us  
that our decision making is genetically programmed –  
So we can't be viewed as responsible for our choices.  
If you are not responsible for your choices,  
They don't matter.  
They tell us that we are just a collection of evolving DNA molecules  
so we should stop thinking of ourselves as important.  
You are just a set of chemical reactions –  
How can chemical reactions have moral meaning?  
They tell us that we inhabit a small planet  
in an out of the way corner of an immense universe,  
So we should quit our illusions of significance  
And get over ourselves and just enjoy life.  
It's all wrong.  
We do matter.  
Our decisions are significant.  
We may live in a small planet in an out of the way corner of the universe,  
But the God who created the whole lot came and lived here with us.  
And he did it for us.  
He did it so that our relationships with him and each other  
would be sorted out.

“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,  
And through him to reconcile to himself all things.”

God clearly thinks you matter.

He wouldn't have gone to all the trouble of becoming a man,  
He wouldn't have gone through all the agony of the cross,  
If he didn't think that humanity matters.

“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.”

And that means you matter.

“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.”

And that means you can know what God is like.

Do you want to know what God thinks about money, sex or power?

Listen to what Jesus said.

Do you want to know what things make God angry?

Discover what things made Jesus angry.

Do you want to know how God treats people?

Look at how Jesus treated people.

Do you want to know what God says to religious hypocrites?

Read what Jesus said to religious hypocrites.

Do you want to know what God says to repentant sinners?

Read what Jesus said to prostitutes and tax collectors.

Do you want to know what God says is the path to eternal life,

What God says is the way to have your sins forgiven,

What God says about the final judgement?

Jesus reveals God's attitude.

Jesus makes known God's decisions.

Jesus is a clear transparent window to the mind of God.

And Jesus reveals all of God's mind.

God was pleased to have ALL his fullness dwell in him.

There are not some aspects of God's character that still remain hidden.

Jesus has shown us it all.

No one can go into a religious trance

And find out things about God that aren't revealed in Jesus.  
The letter to the Colossian Christians was directed to a church  
centred on the town of Colossae in the Lycus valley.  
Paul's description to them of all God's fullness dwelling in Christ  
didn't come from nowhere.  
There were people troubling the church in the Lycus valley.  
You can get a feel for the type of trouble in 2:8.  
"See to it that no one takes you captive  
Through hollow and deceptive philosophy,  
Which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world  
Rather than on Christ."  
Troublemakers were trying to enslave the Colossians  
by promises of further revelation.  
That's great that you have started to follow Jesus, they said.  
It's a good first step.  
But if you want fullness of the Christian experience,  
You need to adopt these practices which have been revealed to us.  
Jesus was good.  
He will get you forgiveness of sins.  
But if you take Jesus and our teachings too,  
You will have forgiveness of sins and fullness of abundant life.  
You will really be able to experience God.  
You will be on the inside track.  
Paul says, 'No'.  
Such teaching will make you a captive.  
Fullness of knowing and experiencing God doesn't come apart from Jesus,  
It comes through Jesus.  
"God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him."  
There are false teachings today  
that would enslave us with further revelation.  
Whether it's Muhammed who said that Jesus was a good prophet,  
But I've got further revelation from the archangel Gabriel,

And if you want to really know God you need my teaching ...  
And he has enslaved a billion people through Islam.  
Do I really need to convince any women here that it is enslavement?  
Or it could be Joseph Smith who said that Jesus taught the truth,  
But I've got further revelation  
that dropped out of heaven etched on gold plates.  
Gold plates that no one apart from Joseph Smith has ever seen,  
But that is by the by.  
So Joseph Smith started the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints  
Otherwise known as the Mormons.  
And they teach that if you want to fully know God  
you need their further revelation in the book of Mormon.  
Or it could be more subtly done inside the church,  
As was happening in the Lycus valley.  
Where people proclaim a further revelation from Holy Spirit.  
But the Holy Spirit has a role  
and that role is to reveal Christ to us.  
He doesn't reveal to us a new revelation.  
He opens our minds to what Christ has already revealed of the Father.  
So if someone calls themselves a prophet  
and proclaims a further revelation from the Holy Spirit,  
Paul says,  
No.  
"God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him."  
There were prophets who proclaimed a new revelation in the OT.  
Prophets in the NT church point people to the revelation of God in Jesus.  
There is no new revelation.  
God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Christ.  
There is nothing more.  
God is not holding out on us.  
He has no further tricks up his sleeve.  
Everything there is to know about God,

Everything there is to experience of God,  
It is all revealed in Christ.  
If you have Christ then you are missing out on nothing.  
As it says in 2:9-10,  
“For in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form,  
And you have been given fullness in Christ.”  
You are not missing out.

Well it changes how you think about Christmas, doesn't it?  
We often say to the children,  
“You get lots of presents at Christmas,  
But Jesus is the best present of all, kids.”  
But he's more than the best present.  
“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,”  
It means God gave everything he had to give.  
There was nothing left.  
You could give someone the best present they'd ever received  
Without completely emptying your bank account.  
When God gave Jesus,  
He didn't just empty his bank account,  
He emptied himself.  
And he was pleased to do it.  
It was not grudgingly done.  
God gave everything he had with a smile upon his face.  
You see an appropriate response to such a gift is not,  
“We'd better make some time to squeeze Jesus in this Christmas.”  
The appropriate response is,  
“How can I give my life to worship him this Christmas?”  
“How can I become better acquainted with Jesus,  
So I can be better acquainted with the fullness of God?”  
The silly season doesn't have to be silly.  
Everyone else rushing around like headless chooks

doesn't mean we have to follow.

We are allowed to decide on our own priorities.

You can decide that Jesus will be your all in all.

You won't regret that decision because

“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him.”

In making Jesus your all in all you are connecting yourself with the fullness of God.

As Paul told the Colossians,

“You have been given fullness in Christ.”

It doesn't just change how you think of Christmas.

It changes how you think of everything.

When the fullness of God comes to dwell with us,

And God gives everything he has to us,

That has to change how we view life itself.

So let me summarise.

“God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,”

What does that mean?

1. It means that God is with us.

He knows what it's like to be fully human.

2. It means that you matter.

God wouldn't have become fully human unless humans mattered to God.

3. It means that you can know what God is like.

Everything there is to know about God is revealed in Jesus.

4. It means that God gave everything he had to give when he sent Jesus.

I'm going to play a song now.

It's based these ideas.

It was written by members of a church in Dubbo in country NSW.

It's called “In Christ”.

The first line is “In Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives.”

The words are a very intentional reflection on the book of Colossians.

As you listen,  
Reflect on how the fullness of God living among us changes things for  
you.