

No One Like Jesus: Just Jesus
By Jason Huff
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Psalm 72:19; Colossians 1:13-20, 2:8-10; John 1:1-5,9-18

Today's final Scripture reading comes from John 1:1-5 and 9-18. May God add His blessings to the reading of His holy Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it...The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

Today, I get to share with you a little of what I've shared with other churches this summer, and the question I've gotten to ask them is this: what fills you up? "Full" is a multi-purpose word. My gas tank's full, which is how I got here this morning. When we are too busy, our calendar's full. Some of us have a hard time telling when our stomachs are full. And what fills our lives? Most of us work. That takes up huge amounts of time, no matter if that work is physical labor or a desk job or managing a household. If you have kids, that fills your morning, noon, and night. Retirees tell me they don't have time for work between volunteering, doctor appointments, family, and finances. We even have a morbid use of the word "full" – if someone lived ninety years before they died, they've lived a "full" life, no matter what they did with it.

We want to be full. Full is the opposite of empty. Emptiness gnaws at us. Loneliness, anger, depression, all result from feeling empty. Have you seen the ads for the Amazon Fire? Amazon gets it. You've binge-watched eight seasons of your favorite series and now it's over. What's next? You have a ShowHole. You despair over your emptiness. But never fear! Amazon Fire to the rescue. This device knows what you like to watch and recommends what to see next so you won't fall into a ShowHole. AdWeek writer Gabriel Beltrone saw the truth when he wrote this: "Naturally, the campaign doesn't point out that the showhole is really just a return to the emotional void that made you want to binge-watch in the first place. But it's probably safer to keep downing an endless stream of charming pixels than reflect on that too much."

We were made to be filled. God designed us to be full, not empty. It's a word that appears several times in the New Testament describing Jesus in various ways. By the time we leave today, I want us to understand the amazing fullness of Jesus, the way that fullness in Jesus is meant to change us, and why Jesus plus nothing else is vital for us in our modern world.

Most people think of Jesus as a good teacher, if nothing else. They may not believe what He said, but they know that much. Being here today likely means you think a great deal more of Jesus. You know that He lived a perfect life. He took away the penalty for our sins, the wrath we should have received for betraying God. If you are a believer, you know He is the Son of God, your Savior who has taken your guilt away and your Lord who is owed your obedience.

But even this doesn't tell us the entirety of Jesus. That's our first take-home thought: *Jesus is fully God, the fullness of God come among us.* Colossians 1:15 tells us that Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God. In Jesus, finally, we see God. Next verse, Colossians 1:16: For by him [Jesus] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; all things were created by him and for him. He created all things, exists before all things, and holds all things together, just as we heard from John 1. Nothing that exists, exists without Him.

Then comes verse 19, Colossians 1:19 – “all the fullness” of God was pleased to dwell in Jesus. This phrase is super important. Because there are levels of fullness, right? If I pour a can of Coke into a glass and it comes near the top, we say it's full. All the Coke is in there. But it's not full to the point where it would overflow the glass. Kurt could come over with a two-liter bottle and fill it even fuller.

The Greek here makes sure we realize Jesus isn't just “some” of God. Jesus isn't a demigod or lesser deity like a son of Zeus or Poseidon. Jesus is fully God. When we see Jesus, we see God. And not just part of Him, and not just full in a relative sense. All of God's fullness is found in Jesus. We affirm that Jesus was fully human, but He is also fully God.

Can we totally comprehend how the creator of the universe becomes an infant in Bethlehem and lives 33 years as a carpenter and preacher? No. But Jesus is not just some of God, or all that God could stuff in there. No, Jesus is the fullness of God. He is completely and totally God. He isn't mythological. He also is different from any of the other prophets of Israel or prophets from any other place or religion. As we heard from John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

John 1:14 that we heard a few minutes ago describes more of God's fullness in Jesus. Jesus is glorious, and that glory is full of grace and truth. Jesus is defined by grace and truth. First, He's full of truth. He shows us we cannot save ourselves. We are not good enough to merit Heaven. His moral teachings prove we fall short of God's standard. He spoke truth to peasants and kings alike. He riled up the religious people who believed they could be right with God on their own.

And yet Jesus was full of grace. He showed grace to all kinds of people, especially those who seemed to deserve it least: tax collectors, prostitutes, thieves, drunkards, the demon-possessed, the poor, the oppressed. The least, last, and lost were the ones who received grace over and over again. Even the Pharisees, who set themselves up as Jesus' enemies, who eventually had Him crucified – He made time for them, talked to them, showed them the flaws in their arguments, and invited them to come to Him for grace and forgiveness and salvation.

John 1:16 says that “from the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.” Because Jesus is the definition of grace, blessings pour out on us from Him. Every believer has the gift of salvation. Our final destiny is secure because we have been adopted as daughters and sons into the Kingdom of God. We are blessed to be able to pray to God and know our prayers are heard and answered. We are blessed to be able to approach God with confidence. He is close to us. And we are blessed with the Holy Spirit – God’s very presence living in us, guiding us and directing us towards Him each and every day.

Here are more thoughts on Jesus’ full divinity: Colossians 2:9-10: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.” Ephesians 1:22: “God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church. And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence.” Luke 4:1: “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert.”

Jesus is fully God, fully participating in the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and He fills us, His church. All that He says and does reflects His divine nature. There is nothing false or untrue in Him. He is perfect. When we follow Him, we follow the perfection of God.

The fullness of God in Jesus leads us to the second take-home thought for the day: *are we full of Jesus?* Jesus intends us to be filled with all the goodness of His love and presence. In John 10:10, Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd over His sheep. He says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that [my sheep] may have life, and have it to the full.” God doesn’t want us just to survive. He wants us to thrive, to live abundant lives full of Him. Jesus is the definition of life; He holds life together. In Him, we find true fullness of life.

When Jesus prayed with His disciples the night He is betrayed, He said in John 17:13, “I am coming to you now, [Father,] but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.” Jesus intends for His followers to have Him in total, including His joy! He has joy in His relationship with the Father; He has joy in His people, the disciples, the church; He has joy overflowing from His being. He is life! He is joy! And He intends us to have it to the brim!

So why do we live with just a little sliver of Jesus in our lives? I admit there have been many times when I’ve tried to live on just a little Jesus. Many of us have tried to make Jesus a side dish on our buffet of life. We want enough Jesus on our plate to know that when we die, we’ll go to Heaven. But many people who say they’re Christians want as little of Him on their plate as possible. Some people try to hold Him off until dessert, to say, “Oh, yeah, I need to stuff some Jesus in to make everything else I’ve done OK.”

Our lives are stuffed with things we *think* we want. Jesus is a nice idea, but there’s no time for Him inbetween baseball and karate and homework. Jesus is great, but there’s work and family and meals and life. Jesus is King of the universe, worthy of all love and glory and time, but I am a sucker for the latest PlayStation game and the newest sci-fi movie. When we slow down, we find we’re empty. A little Jesus on the side doesn’t satisfy. Sometimes we think, “Why isn’t my life better as a Christian?” Sometimes it’s because we’re barely Christian at all.

Now when I've talked about this with people before, sometimes they've said to me, "Oh, I've got to do a lot more for Jesus if I'm going to get to heaven." And I'm like, "NOOO!" It's not about doing stuff; it's about being full of Jesus. What's even worse than not being full of Jesus is putting Jesus "stuff" on our plate trying to fill ourselves with Jesus because it's good for us. What happens when you put a plate of peas in front of a kid? They sit in front of that plate a long time, and they will eat enough to eventually leave the table, but they're going to hate it.

Many of us do that with Jesus – we fill our days with Jesus "stuff." We schedule in a Bible study, a service group, band practice, Sunday morning, Wednesday night. And we burn out. We think it's good to have our lives revolve around church. But despite all the God stuff we do, He doesn't break through. Those things we think are good for us can kill us spiritually if filling our schedule with church events crowds out the time we need to be full of Jesus!

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He gave them manna to eat every day. It was winning the lottery! No matter how much manna you picked up, there was always enough to fill your household. It was the original "take and bake!" No planting, no harvesting, no threshing – just go get some, knead it, and throw it on the stove. It sustained them for 40 years. But the Israelites pleaded to go back into slavery rather than to eat more manna. That's one reason God condemned that generation; their children entered the promised land instead of them. They had God's diet, but they ate it out of obligation, not love. They were given the law of God and got sick of it. They had tons of God around them, but very little love of God in their hearts.

So how do we get filled with Jesus rather than everything the world offers? How do we wind up satisfied with the fullness of Christ? The first step, above all else, is to pray about it. Pray that the Holy Spirit would fill you, that He would not just be present in your life but actively engaging you every day, filling you with the presence of Christ. You can't make yourself full of Jesus, but Jesus promises to fill those who want Him. So asking for that good gift is the best way to receive it.

Then pray that as the Holy Spirit fills us, He changes our attitudes about time with God. If I look at time spent in God's Word each day or prayer or service as a duty, I'm going to be as excited about it as making my bed – and my bed doesn't get made much! We have the joy and privilege of approaching God each day. We have the honor of being His children. We have His words written down so we can know what He is like. We get the chance to show the love of God we've experienced to others as we serve them and show them who our wonderful God is. If we find joy in experiencing the fullness of God, our lives will be as rich as they can possibly be.

And that leads me to the last major thought for today: *do you believe all you need is Jesus – and that all the church needs is Jesus, too?* I am convinced that the modern church, over the last hundred years, have lost its way because of one simple thing – we've become convinced that Jesus isn't enough. A couple hundred years ago, people became convinced that the church wasn't emotional enough – you needed an emotional conversion. In the 1920s, the church debated whether we should throw out the supernatural stuff in the Bible if people didn't believe it. In the 1950s, being a member of a church became less about what you believed and more about being a part of the community and making business connections.

In the last forty years, the evangelical church has taken off. We evangelicals want others to know Jesus and want to be faithful to Scripture. But sadly, we started trading in the biblical model of evangelism for something that seemed more “practical.” We’ve used whatever we could to get people into church – light shows, comfy seats, coffee bars, gigantic playsets with rows of video game consoles, classes on how to get your finances together, your marriage together, your family together, your work together. Maybe *you* came to church for that.

We started to believe that a little bit of Jesus would solve everything in our lives, and so we packed a little Jesus into everything else that we thought was *really* important. Jesus became a means to an end. Instead of offering people the fullness of God found in Jesus Christ, we started selling religious goods and services. The problem is, though, that a little Jesus is never enough. A little Jesus won’t save your marriage or fix your awful financial mess.

In fact, even the fullness of Jesus might not do it – because Jesus didn’t live and die so you could have a slightly better life. He gives us a new life, a life driven by Him, a life full of His love and mercy and grace, a life filled with joy and peace. He doesn’t promise a comfortable life or an easy life; He tells His followers that our lives will have more hardships than average, not less. But He promises a meaningful life that reflects His glory – a life worth living.

And so I ask myself, and I ask you – have you ever feared telling someone about CrossWay because it doesn’t have enough besides Jesus? But if you hear about Jesus every week...if you hear about His mercy shown to you on the cross...what are you waiting for?

Maybe your friends are older or younger than who normally shows up. Maybe the music isn’t up to the standards you expect. Maybe my sermons don’t always move you. (They don’t always move me!) Maybe you disagree with some point of theology you hear. The question is, is Jesus here at CrossWay? Is He in your life and your church? If He is, then let’s stop worrying about what’s not perfect about our presentation and get busy introducing people to Jesus.

Because what we win people with is what we win people to. If you win people to a charismatic pastor, what happens when he finds another church or falls into sin? If you win people to the band, what happens when the personnel change? Win people through something other than Jesus? What happens when that thing leaves the building? Friends, let’s not pretend. Let’s get the spiritual math right. Jesus plus something else equals nothing. Jesus plus nothing else equals everything. Win others to Jesus, invite them to meet Jesus in your home, in our Bible study, at our church, and then they will have all they really need.

Jesus is God in every ounce of His fullness; deity in His very core; every fiber of His being is our Lord and Savior. He is the fullness of every true virtue in the universe. He wants to fill you with Himself by the power of His Holy Spirit. Let Him do it. And then invite others to be filled with Him. He will. This is the grand destiny He has for us – to be like Him in every possible way, filled to the brim with Him. May we not fill our days with trivial things that will ultimately leave us empty. Instead, may we be filled with Him, glorify Him, and enjoy Him from this day forth and forevermore.