

## 13C 2025

I continue to marvel at how clearly Paul and Jesus laid out the good news of God's love, and how assiduously people turn it into something else.

This is nothing new.

In Paul's struggles with the wayward Collosians, he implores them to put away their desires to win earthly rewards and focus on the real reason we have come to dwell on classroom earth.

Like any educational opportunity, it is challenging and it is a privilege to be here.

"Put to death, therefore," Paul writes, "whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry)."

Similarly, when a person requests of Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me," he responds, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."

Greed leads to suffering, division, environmental degradation, war, to name a few results.

Despite Paul's and Jesus' clear warnings, greed is not usually a focus of Christian ire.

I do not see Christians marching in outrage over greed.

No.

In fact, many have made their peace with it and choose to focus their religious fervor on other issues, issues curiously never mentioned by Jesus.

By now, you have heard me explain the kind of outrage that has become common in our culture.

Seeking false comfort, people imagine a black and white world where they are on the side of absolute righteousness and others, *and they know who*, are on the side of pure evil.

“I’m outraged,” in other words, usually means I am projecting my insecurities onto someone else rather than facing myself.

Americans have had a long love affair with greedy people.

We look up to them, admire how cleverly they manipulate us to enrich themselves.

In contrast, Paul and Jesus tell us not to worry about earthly things, and yet there are churches that are more like political action committees than spiritual families.

Incidentally, the IRS has made it acceptable for ministers to tell their parishioners how to vote.

If you are waiting on me for pronouncements, do not hold your breath.

I will stick to the gospel.

Christians have long contributed to division by treating other groups and individuals as if they do not bear the same divinity that we do,

and this, despite Jesus' telling us that we are *one* and Paul's saying, "there is no . . .

Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!"

We make the divisions, not God.

Christ is all and in all.

Not just in those we like.

Not just in those who look or think like us.

Not just in those who belong to the same religion as us.

There is nothing that is not Christ, that out of which all things were formed, regardless of what we call the Christ.

There is no one who is not a part of the Divine, but we all tend to get lost in the things of this world, at least for a time.

This is an important lesson.

The ensuing disappointment is how we learn that this world is not worth worshipping.

It is just an expedient towards something much more significant.

It is a spiritual boot camp.

There is something much more precious, the love from which all things are created.

Jesus came to bring us back to an awareness of our true nature, the divine spark in all of us.

He came, in other words, not to divide us and to judge us, but to help us to grow in awareness of our nature, in the nature of all things, so that we can be reconciled with God.

John writes, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

We turned even that beautiful statement into an economic exchange—Jesus paid a price for us and we just have to buy into that, to say yes to that, as an investment in our future outcomes.

We think, in other words, that we are purchasing some real estate in heaven by flattering God with our attention.

What a narcissistic God, one much like the greedy people our culture admires!

This has nothing to do with love.

When people speak, consider well what it is they serve, their own interests or God.

God is all that there really is other than illusion—the illusion that our ego is somehow separate from God, opposed to God, or independent from any God.

We must ask ourselves, do our actions and the actions of others support humility, compassion, understanding, peace, cooperation?

Or do they actually lead to something else, such as seeking personal enrichment through fear, insecurity, war, and division?

Do not be fooled and continue to let your light shine wherever you go.

Some will be drawn to it.

Others are still too blind, too certain that they are going to bend the world to their wishes.

They forget how temporary it all is.

Whether in this life or the next, the question eventually is not how successful were we in earthly terms, but did we love anyone?

Did anyone love us?

We turned Christianity's pronouncement of God's inalienable love into a system of rewards and punishments mediated by clergy.

We made it into a justification for another clique, another exclusive group against other groups—the crusades, the inquisition, the Salem witch hunts—rather than a proclamation of God's love, unity, and peace.

What the statement in John means, if we read it in context, is that Jesus did not come like the pharisees to judge us, to uphold a social hierarchy, but to instruct us, to guide us, to lead us lovingly like a shepherd, to coin a phrase, back to an

awareness of our sacred nature so that we are no longer lost in the world, but have direction, purpose, focus, presence, love.

So here we gather, together, all bearers of the sacred spark, all a part of God, rejoicing in our common divine nature, and helping to spread the good news so that people do not get lost in this world, lost in greed and hatred, judgment and anger.

Jesus did not incarnate in order to be worshipped, but to teach us how to be, how to live out of our holy nature, how to connect with others, to celebrate joyfully our unity, our sacred purpose.

This is the gospel, the good news as taught by Jesus and Paul.