

The Fullness of Christ

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 February 2016

Preacher: Willard Lyons

[0:00] The thoughts and attitudes of the world and even God's people are changing in this day and time.

A lot of churches are struggling.

The natural question to me was, what's the reason? What's the cause for that? I started seeking the Lord's direction in that.

The thought occurred to me that the thing that is missing is common in all churches, whether they're thriving or whether they're struggling, whether they're growing, whether they're in decline or plateaued, whatever.

They all have the same common need. And that common need is the fullness of Christ at operation within the body.

[1:12] The fullness of Christ at operation within the body. So I took it that the Lord was showing that to me for the message this morning. So that's what we're going to begin looking at.

So turn with me to begin with John's Gospel, chapter 1. And we'll kind of use this as a kicking or springboard, if you will, to spring into the rest of what we have to see.

And it's a glorious thing that God shows us here. You know, how many of you have been a member of Highland Park for over 10 years?

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. How many over 20? How many of you forever? Yeah, yeah. Some of you. Yeah, yeah.

You've seen a lot of things transpire, no doubt. You've seen various pastors come and stay a while, then move to other fields. Others come on.

[2:12] You've seen ups. You've seen downs. I don't know about Highland, but I know a lot of places you've seen hugs and kisses and you've seen fisticuffs almost. But you've seen a lot of things transpire through the years.

One of the downfalls of that is things become commonplace to us. To the point where, you know, we view our relationship in the body as simply being a part of the church, which is all right.

But I think we need to recognize it as something far different. That God has placed every one of us. Paul speaks of this to us in the scriptures, in his letters.

That God places who he wills in the body and he has a purpose for doing that. So if we recognize the fact that, if you're a member here at Highland Park, that God has placed me here.

I didn't just come in here and decide this is where I think I really ought to go to church and belong.

God's placed you here and he's placed you here for a purpose. And whatever that individual unique purpose is, it's our responsibility to find out.

[3:31] And then just ask God or submit to the Lord and say, God, here's what you've called me to do here. And I just submit myself to you for you to do that through me.

But there's a necessity, not only in doing that, but there's a necessity that comes along with that. In 1 John chapter 1, very familiar passage to you.

Let's begin. In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made.

In him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

The same came for a witness to bear witness of the light that all men through him might believe. He was not that light but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

[4:35] He was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not. He came unto his own and his own received him not, but to as many as received him.

To them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name, which were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor the will of man, but of God.

Now verse 14. And the word was made flesh. That word that was in the beginning was made flesh and dwelt or tabernacled among us.

And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and fruit. Jesus bare witness of him and cried saying, this is he of whom I spake.

He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me. And of his fullness, now notice this, of his fullness have all we receive and grace for grace.

[5:40] For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The word was made flesh.

Made gives us the indication that there was preexistence. He was made flesh. He who preexisted was made flesh.

And the purpose of his being made flesh was to tabernacle or literally to pitch his tent with us. Now I want you to recognize something with me.

No, there's no happenstance, if you will, for the usage of words in the scripture. Every word has an important meaning, has a purpose in that.

When he said he came to dwell or tabernacle among us, we have to recognize that the inference here goes back to the Old Testament tabernacle and the things that transpired there.

[6:43] Remember Israel in the wilderness, that Old Testament tabernacle was the place of God's presence with his people. Sure, he directed them by the pillar of fire.

He directed them by the cloud of smoke. But when he came to meet with his people, he met in that tabernacle in the wilderness that he established with them and for them.

Likewise, the picture here is, God puts on a body of flesh. He's made flesh to come and tabernacle with us.

So, the person of Christ Jesus, who is the word, tabernacling or pitching his tent among us, becomes the instrument of the divine presence or the manifest glory of God, if you will.

He is the one through whom the glory of God is to be seen in the midst of those he came to dwell with. Now, the word was made flesh.

[7:50] He tabernacled among us. Psalm 68, 18 says, Thou hast ascended on high. Thou hast led captivity captive. Thou hast received gifts for men.

Yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Now, he goes on to say, Not only has he pitched his tent among us, but we beheld his glory.

That glory was then revealed to our gaze. That manifest glory of God in the person of Christ Jesus was revealed to our gaze.

Not in the sense simply that they saw him as the carpenter from Nazareth. But this was stuff that was spiritually discerned, if you will. They saw or began to see him in who he was.

The very son of God. We beheld his glory. Now, he was, yes, as we said, the manifestation of the glory of God in that tabernacle he possessed.

[9:03] But when he says we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, the idea here is, it's not simply a glory that resembles the glory of God or the Father.

But it was a glory that was fitting to him as the Son of God. As the only begotten Son of God. The only begotten of the Father.

That glory. We saw his glory. The glory that was his in who he was. As the only begotten of the Father. Now, the thing we recognize in that is this.

You see and understand why he came in the body of flesh. What he did in the body of flesh. What he accomplished in the body of flesh.

And you recognize that there is that little uniqueness to the glory that he possessed. Now, when we think of the idea of the glory of God or the glory of Christ Jesus, we need to recognize what that is.

[10:13] You know, we paint in our picture of the mind of the spectacular, all right, of the miraculous, if you will, of the splendor, of the magnificence of who he is.

Now, that's a part of that. But that splendor and that magnificence is really the outreign, if you will, of what he possesses within himself to make him who he is.

The glory of God, the glory of Christ, I think we could say is the sum total of all the inherent attributes that he possesses within himself.

It's all that that makes him who he is. Now, he has been pleased to show us somewhat of that through the scripture and personally to those that were there in his day.

But that's not all of it. That's a mere shadow, if you will, of everything that he is that makes him who he is. Thankfully, one of these days when he comes, we'll stand before him in a glorified body and get to see him in all of his glory.

[11 : 28] And understand and comprehend and experience all that he is. But that's in a limited way in the present. But let's continue on now. We beheld his glory.

All those inherent attributes displayed in splendor, magnificence. But he said he also is full of grace and truth. All right?

Now, it's not the glory that's full of grace and truth. It's the one that tabernacled himself with us. He is filled with grace and truth. Grace, all the riches that the redeeming love of God and of Christ has shown forth to lost humanity.

Truth. Truth is the idea of fulfillment, if you will. Fulfillment of the promises. In particular, the promises of Psalm 89 that God made to David.

That his seed would be an eternal seed. That his throne and his kingdom would be an eternal kingdom. All of those things he promised in that covenant relationship. In Christ Jesus, he said.

[12 : 38] This one that came to tabernacle among us. This one that comes in his fullness. Is the one that is the one filled with grace.

And truth. Or Old Testament speaking of grace and mercy. Fulfillment of all those promises that God said he would produce.

Through the one that was to come. Now. Before Christ came. They were simply promises. But in the fullness of time.

Those promises were fulfilled. Turned into truth. Alright. Now. God stands in truth. God stands in. Fulfillment of his promises.

Let's just say that. Now. Look at verse 16. And of his fullness. Of his fullness.

[13 : 42] Have we received. Or have we all received. And grace. For grace. Now. Not only did he come. To manifest the glory of God.

In the fullness. Of all that he is. But Paul. John says here. That all of us. Talk about the redeemed. All of us have received. Of that fullness. Christ has bestowed upon us. Something of that fullness.

That he possesses. Now. What is it that he has given to us? When you think of how.

What Christ has done. In redeeming us. That moment of time. When the lost sinner. Recognizes his need of Christ Jesus. Jesus. And God gives him the ability.

[14 : 42] To exercise saving faith. Then. The moment he places that faith. And trust. And receives Jesus. As Lord and Savior. The divine nature.

Invades his life. If you will. Comes within him. The very presence. Of God. Comes to dwell. Within that life.

Now. Here's. Here's the thing. I think we miss. A lot of times. How much of God. Comes within us. You look at the average.

Professing believer. And you put them. Side by side. With an unbeliever. And I'm talking about. You know. There's different degrees. Of people. But. When I say.

An unbeliever. A good. Moral. Upright. Unbeliever. Not. What we would consider. The down and out. Quite evident.

[15 : 44] Ungodly sinner. If you put the two of those. Side by side. Would you see a difference? Would you see a difference? Now.

I know you're supposed to. But the question is. Do we? Do we see. A difference? There is no way. In the world. That we can separate. All that God is. From God. You cannot. Separate him. From his glory. From the internal.

Inherent. Attributes. Of Christ. And of God. You cannot. Separate him. From any of those. So that when he comes. And dwells within the body. Dwells within the.

Believing. Sinner. If you will. He comes. In everything. That he is. He comes. In his. Fullness.

[16 : 41] Or John here says. Of his fullness. Have we received. And grace. For grace. One blessing.

Upon another. Until we're completely. Filled. With the fullness. Of God. Boy. I hope he recognized that. You know. There's more to being saved.

Than just going to heaven. Now that's the. I. That's the cherry. On top of the icing. On top of the cake. But what's the icing. On top of the cake. It's that work.

That God wants to do. Within the life. Of the individual. Believers. Thus. Then collectively. In the church. To bring us.

To the point. Where we can. Be experiencing. Individually. And in the body. The fullness. Of Christ. Now. Run over to Ephesians.

[17 : 36] Chapter 1. Let's take a look. At something here. Ephesians. Chapter 1. The apostle Paul here.

Begins. In verse 15. And following. Begins to. To. Pray. You know. Show what he. Tell what he prays for. When he prays for the church. At Ephesus. In verse 15.

He said. Wherefore. I also. After I heard of your faith. In the Lord Jesus. And love unto all the saints. Cease not to give thanks for you. Making mention of you.

In my prayers. That. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ. The father of the glory. Notice that. May give unto you. The spirit of wisdom. And revelation. In the knowledge of him.

The eyes of your understanding. Being enlightened. That you may know. What is the hope of his calling. And what the riches of the glory. Of his inheritance. In the saints. And what is the exceeding.

[18 : 32] Greatness of his power. To us. Where who believe. According to the working. Of his mighty power. Now. I want you to pick up on that. For just a moment. He said. Of all the things. I want you to understand.

They build one upon the other. But he says. As you. As you begin to see these things. And experience these things. He said. I pray that you will see. What is the exceeding. Greatness. Of his power. To us. Word. To us. Who believe. And that is. According to the working. Of his mighty power.

Same power. That he wrought in Christ. When he raised him. From the dead. Set him at his right hand. In heavenly places. Far above all principality. And power. And might.

Dominion. Now. Look at verse 22. He's put all things. Under his feet. Gave him to be head. Over all.

[19 : 25] To. The church. Christ. As the head. Of the church. God gave. Christ. To the church. As his gift.

To them. And he gave him. As. The head. Which. Verse 23. Which is. His body. Now notice. Talking about the church here.

He said. Gave. Christ. To the church. Which is. His. Body. The fullness. The fullness. Of him. That filleth. All. In. All. All. Not only. Did Jesus. Come. In his fullness. But he has.

Bestowed upon. The church. That fullness. You know. The picture here. Is that. Christ. Jesus. Creator.

[20 : 21] Creator. God. He's the creator. We see in Colossians. He's the creator. He's the sustainer. Of what he created. In other words. He has given. Everything. To his creation. That it needs.

To sustain itself. Likewise. As the head. Of the church. Christ. Jesus. Has given. Everything. To. The church. That it needs. Christ. As its head. Has given. Everything. To the church. That it needs. In order for it. To accomplish. The design.

And purposes. Of God. For it. He gives. To the church. Not only. He gives. To the church. His fullness. But makes. The church. His fullness.

Oh. That's so good. When. When. When. When. When. The church. Is. Experiencing. The fullness. Of Christ. In the individual. Believer. And then corporately.

[21 : 17] Together. When people. Come. They. Sense. What. God. Is. Because. He's here. In the life. Of his people.

In. His. Fullness. That's. What the church. Stands. In. Need of. Today. Now. They are.

The. Fullness. Of God. Colossians. Chapter 1. Remember. What it says. Verse 15. Speaking. Of the Lord. Jesus.

Is the image. Of the invisible. God. The firstborn. Of every creature. For by him. Were all things. Created. That are in heaven. That are on earth. Visible. And invisible. Whether they be. Thrones.

Or dominions. Principalities. Or powers. All things. Were created. By him. And for him. He is before. All things. By him. All things. Consist. He is the head.

[22:11] Of the body. The church. Who is the beginning. The firstborn. From the dead. That in all things. He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the father. That in him. Should all.

The fullness. Well. Yeah. Over in verse 9. Of chapter 2. In him. Dwelleth all the fullness. Of the Godhead. Father. I want you to get the picture.

Here. In the person. In the person of Christ Jesus. You find everything. You find. In the father. Of that fullness.

We have all been made potatoes. He has made. The church. That. Fullness. After.

Chapter 4. Of Ephesians. I see a clock.

[23:14] I see a clock down there. Is that clock right Tom? It's 10. 10 o'clock. I didn't ask Don.

How long he usually preaches. But. We'll preach. Until we get done. Amen. Oh me. Okay. All right.

Now. Here we go. Ephesians chapter 4.

Now. We saw the reality. Christ has. Made the church. His fullness. Now. What's the practicality. Of that. What's the working. Of that fullness.

In the church. In the body of Christ. What is that? Chapter 4. Verse number 7. Let's pick up there. Under every one of us.

Talking about believers here. Every one of us. Is given grace. According to the measure. Of the gift of Christ. In other words. Whatever the. Whatever the. The divine enablement.

[24:12] God has given you. Or the. The gift. If you will. That God has given you. Whatever grace. Is needed. To satisfy that will. He gives that. Grace to you. Whatever the measure.

Of that may be. Wherefore. He saith. When he ascended on high. He laid captivity. Captive. And gave gifts unto men. Now he. That ascended. What is it?

But he also descended. First into the lower parts. Of the earth. He that descended. Is the same also. That ascended up. Far above all heavens. That he might fill all things. Now verse 11. He gave some apostles.

Some prophets. Some evangelists. Some pastors. And teachers. For the perfecting. Or equipping of the saints. For the work.

Of ministry. Now. Catch this. He gives. Gifted men. Of varieties. To the church. And he gives those men.

[25:09] To the church. For the purpose. Of equipping them. Teaching them. Training them. Equipping them. Through the word of God. To perform the work. Of the ministry.

All right. So that. And the purpose of that is. For the edifying. Of the body of Christ. Till we all. Now notice. Until we all.

Come. Unto the unity. Of the faith. And of the knowledge. Of the son of God. Unto a perfect man. Unto the measure.

Of the stature. Of the fullness. Of Christ. Now there's a lot in there. But here's what he's saying. God gives the gifts to the men.

The men. To the church. To equip them. So that they can come to a point. That they are in. The unity.

[26:07] Of faith. All right. Now. Unity. Of faith. Oneness. Of faith. And. Knowledge.

Of the son of God. Unity. Of faith. All of us. That have been saved. By the grace of God. Have exercised. The same faith. To receive Christ.

I mean. That's a given. There's only one way. To do that. Only one way. Avenue. Of being saved. That is placing faith. And trust. In Jesus Christ. As Lord. And Savior. Now.

So we all have that in common. But when it comes to the understanding. And the exercise. And experience. Of further faith.

Then that's. Differing. Among the believers. Now. Let me. Take it a little further. Give you a good working definition. Of faith. I. I discovered this a long time ago.

[27:05] You look through the scripture. You look through the. The book of Hebrews 11 and 12. You see the. The list of those. Of faith. What do you find? They govern their lives.

And they. They. They. Accomplish. Or achieve the things of God. That they accomplish. By simply. Being. In obedience. To what God had said.

Done. Or promised. So I came up with this. This definition. Of faith. Faith. Is simply. A positive. Response. To all that God has said.

Promised. What he has done. And who he is. That's what faith is. It's not the idea. Simply of. Well I believe that.

I trusted that. You know. Yeah. No. It's the idea. Of responding. Same thing. James says. Faith without works is dead. It's a response.

[28:01] It's a response. To what God has said. Promised. Done. Now. So. So in the. In the church. And the individual believers. The degree of understanding.

And exercise. Of. Faith. Not saving faith. But faith. In. And following the designs. And will of God. Very.

So what. Paul is saying here. Is this. The goal. Is to come. To the unity. Of the faith. And then. In the knowledge. Of the Lord Jesus. So that. Then. We can all come. Into the fullness. Of. Christ. Now.

How do we do that? Look what he said. We all come. To the unity. Of the faith.

[28:57] And of the knowledge. Of. The son of God. Now. Recognize with me. If you will. Knowledge there. That Greek word. Knowledge.

That. Translated. Knowledge. Has the idea. Of full. Precise. Correct. Knowledge. Yeah. Yeah. Now. It's more than just. Up here. The kind of knowledge. He's talking about. All right. Full. Precise. Correct.

Knowledge. Of God. You remember. What Paul said. To the church. To the church. At Philippi. Philippians chapter 3.

Remember. Remember what he says there. No. In that. In that dissertation. Where he says. If anybody has a right. To brag on the. The things accomplished. In the flesh.

[29:52] It's me. In essence. He said. I was the poster. Poster child. Of Judaism. You know. In my day and time. But then he came.

To know Christ. He was confronted. By Christ. Saw him. As Savior. And Lord. Trusted him. Accepted him. And everything. Changed. All right.

And so he said. I did away. With everything. That. Was contrary. To what Christ is. Verse number. Let's go to verse number 8. Or 7 or 7. What things were gained to me. Those I kind of lost for Christ. Yea. Doubtless. And I count all things. But loss. For the excellency.

Of the knowledge. Of Christ Jesus. My Lord. For whom I have suffered. The loss of all things. And do count them. But done. That I may. Win Christ. Literally. Acquire.

[30:47] The perfections. Of Christ. Within my life. Be found in him. Not having. Mine own righteousness. Which is of the law. But that which is. Through faith of Christ. The righteousness.

Which is of God. By faith. Now look at verse 10. That I might. Know him. It's experiential knowledge. That I might know him.

As thoroughly. And completely. As an individual. Can ever know Christ. That's how I want. To know him. And folks. That's how God wants us.

To know him. That completely. That thoroughly. So that then. The fullness. Of Christ. Can be. In exercise.

Within our life. And our truth. Back in Ephesians 4. Till we all come. Into the unity. To have the same.

[31:44] In other words. The same. Quality. And quantity. Of faith. And knowledge. Of the son of God. Unto a perfect. Or. The idea there. Is a spiritually.

Mature. Man. Unto the measure. Of the stature. Of the fullness. Of Christ. So that all of us. Come to that point.

Of spiritual maturity. So that we. Can. Then. Experience. The fullness. Of Christ. Now.

He goes on. And shows. What happens. When that takes place. Verse 14. That we henceforth. Be no more children. Tossed to and fro. Carried about.

With every wind of doctrine. By the slight of men. And cunning craftiness. Whereby they lay in wait. To deceive. That speaking the truth. And love. May grow up. Into literally. Unto him.

[32:41] In all things. Which is the head. Even Christ. From whom the body. Fitly joined together. And compacted. By that which. Every joint supply. According to the effectual.

Working of the measure. Of every part. Make it increase. Of the body. Unto the edifying. Of itself. In love. Boy. You talk about a mouthful. But let me tell you.

What he's saying here. All. Aware of how. Intricate. The body. The human body.

How many of you. Have. Have lost. A body part. Yeah. Anybody. Yeah. I mean. Surgery. You know. Go in there.

Take this out. You're not quite the same. Amen. How many felt. Exactly the same. As you did. Before you. Started feeling bad.

[33:38] When they took that. Whatever it was out. Yeah. Yeah. See how integral. Every part. Of the body. Works together. For that body.

To function. The way it was designed. To function. Yeah. Yeah. Muscle. Bone. Sinew. Tissue. Blood supply. That. Gives. Nourishment. To the various organs. Of the body. Everything needs to function. Correctly. And that's the picture.

That he paints here for us. As I said before. God has put. Everybody in the body. For a purpose. You may be a head. You may be a foot.

You may be a heart. No. Jesus is the heart. Whatever. And he's put you here. So that this body. Can function. The way that he's designed it.

[34:32] To function. To accomplish through it. Whatever it is. He wants to accomplish through it. Yeah. Yeah. That comes. Each believer.

Experiencing. The fullness of Christ. Which comes. Through a. Through a continual. Precise. Exact. Correct. Knowledge.

Of the Son of God. Yeah. Produce that unity of faith. Oneness. So that all of that. Works. Yeah. Y'all have got a sweet fellowship here. My wife and I enjoy coming here. We've been able to come on Sunday nights more than we have on Sunday morning. Oh yeah. You've got a sweet fellowship here. But I would venture to say.

I know. You've not arrived yet. Amen. Amen. As a church. As a church. There's still a lot of work to do. But instead of us trying to figure out what is it that we're supposed to do.

[35:32] How do we get this thing going? That's it. Every individual believer. Having a relationship. A walk with. A fellowship. An intimacy with Christ.

Whereby we are coming to know Him more and more each day. Till we come to that point. Where we learn how to trust Him. We see what He wants to do.

We recognize how He wants to do it. And we're just in unity. In all of it. And God can then accomplish what He wants to accomplish. Yeah.

And it's the responsibility of each and every believer. Now in closing. Let's flip over to Ephesians chapter 3. Paul does a lot of praying for the church at Ephesus.

Verse 14. Look what he says. For this cause. I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

[36:40] That He would grant you. According to the riches of His glory. To be strengthened with might by His Spirit. In the inner man. That Christ might dwell in your hearts.

By faith. That ye being rooted and grounded in love. May be able to apprehend with all saints. What is the breadth and length and depth and height.

To know the love of Christ with passive knowledge. That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now look at the next verse. Now unto Him. That is able to do exceeding abundantly. That's pretty good.

How many zeros are there in that equation. Exceedingly abundant. Or exceeding abundantly.

[37:37] Above all that we ask or think. And that all accomplished. By the power that worketh in us.

Earlier we saw the power that rose Christ into the dead. Level toward us. This is in us. In lieu of the presence of the fullness of Christ.

And to Him be glory in the church. Yeah. Oh. We have had through the years.

Grand schemes. And designs. And plans. For the church. What we had loved to see happen. Trying to figure out how to make it happen. You realize He's saying here.

Even the greatest things that we can conceive in our mind. Have no comparison. To what God wants to do.

[38:43] And can do. And will do. In the church. That has at operation with Him.

The fullness of Christ. So. Comes down to this. What do we want?

How much of God do we want? Just enough to make us comfortable? Or do we want to have as much of God. At operation.

Within us. Through us. That He can accomplish. Every single thing. He desires. For God. Yeah.
Yeah. It's ours.
If we want. It's ours.