

Raised with Christ || A series through Colossians

Look in the Box!

Sermon Synopsis: There are all sorts of ways we try to exert control over ourselves, others, even God. But freedom comes when we stop trying to fit our lives neatly into boxes that we can control, and instead, take a look inside the "box."

Colossians 2:13-23 (ESV)

13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, **14** by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. **15** He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. **16** Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. **17** These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. **18** Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, **19** and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. **20** If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— **21** "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"— **22** (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? **23** These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Intro: Jude, presents, and his fascination with boxes.

We too are fascinated by "boxes." Jude...**Look in the box!**

We all want transformation

We just don't know where to look...so we develop this fascination with the box (external).

Boxes of control = doing

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. (Colossians 2:16, ESV)

Boxes of control = feeling

Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, (Colossians 2:17, ESV)

These things bad? No...they're boxes, used to contain something of primary importance. But in Colossae, they are being made into the THING...as a means of control. Us too...

- We try to control our lives through *external* actions (e.g., church attend, kids behaving)
- We try to control others too (e.g., judging other's spiritual journey, expectations, etc)

External behavior can't create transformation

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? **These have indeed an appearance** of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but **they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.** (Colossians 2:20-23)

Why not?

And **you, who were dead** in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, (Col. 2:13)

illust: dead succulents (a new flower pot won't bring it to life!)

Only God can bring transformation

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Colossians 2:13-15)

When it comes to actions/feelings, it's not about the box. **Look in the box** (heart/mouth)

Actions = symptomatic of heart

Hence Paul: behaviors, practices, observances are merely a *shadow* of true spirituality.

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. **These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.** (Colossians 2:15-17)

^Reality

Gotta **Look in the box.**

Now what?

illust: nothing to attach our lights to...so we put it in a flower pot. Bad idea.

Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not **holding fast to the Head**, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. (Colossians 2:18-19)

Ironically...we hold fast to Christ *through* spiritual disciplines. Practices are NOT the end themselves, nor do they contain any power. Only Christ has the power to change you.

What practices *can do* is slow you down enough to receive from Christ.

1. Not-yet-Christian: trust
2. Nominal Christian: engage
3. Religious Christian: surrender

Look in the box. learning to give up control, and surrender to God. (Sabbath, silence, confession)

Examen: Where was God inviting you to surrender control?